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13. WINTERING SITE FIDELITY IN WESTERN MARSH-HARRIER *CIRCUS AERUGINOSUS* (LINN.), IN KEOLADEO NATIONAL PARK, BHARATPUR, RAJASTHAN

The Western marsh-harrier *Circus aeruginosus* is a common winter visitor to the Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, Rajasthan (27° 7.6' - 27° 12.2' N and 77° 29.5' - 77° 33.2' E). The Bombay Natural History Society has been carrying out intensive studies on the wintering ecology of the species in the Park since 1996.

Six Western marsh-harriers were studied during the winter of 1999-2000. Four harriers were fitted with radio-transmitters, and two were ringed. One adult female was ringed with a black band on the right leg with 'C' etched on it, and two rings – one each of plastic (orange coloured) and aluminium on the left leg. The rings could be clearly seen with binoculars and telescope from a distance of 100-200 m. The bird was caught on January 20, 2000, in the wetland of Block 'K' of the Park by the Stick and Glue Method, on fish bait. It left for its breeding ground by the end of March 2000. The bird was seen every winter since 1996 in this area and was identified by its peculiar plumage and eye colour, before ringing. It was recorded again in winter in the same area on October 14, 2000.

Site fidelity for breeding grounds has already been recorded in Western marsh-harriers (Witkowski 1989). However, I have not come across any reference on Western marsh-harriers returning to the wintering ground, year after year.

Wintering site fidelity has been recorded in birds. Fischer (1981) found thrashers *Toxostoma* sp. in the same wintering territories for the consecutive year, and Price (1981) recorded greenish leaf-warblers *Phylloscopus trochiloides* returning to the same wintering areas in southern India. Among raptors, Steppe buzzards *Buteo buteo vulpinus* in South Africa, rough legged buzzards *Buteo lagopus* in South Sweden, and common buzzards *Buteo buteo* in Europe have been found returning to the same wintering areas in successive years (Olsson 1958, Newton 1979). One *Buteo buteo* was seen in the same place for eight consecutive winters, and another distinctive bird for twelve winters (de Bont 1952, Schuster 1940).

Birds have been recorded returning to the same territories year after year, both at breeding and wintering grounds, because they are likely to be more successful as they have to spend less time in getting familiarised with the habitat, predators and to some extent food sources. Site fidelity in birds also reflects on the quality of habitat in terms of food and habitat availability.

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14. SOUTHERNMOST RECORD OF EASTERN CALANDRA-LARK
MELANOCORYPHA BIMACULATA AND SIGHTING OF LESSER KESTREL
FALCO NAUMANNI FROM MATHERAN, A HILL STATION NEAR MUMBAI

Matheran is situated at c. 73° 18' E and 18° 28' N in the Western Ghats and is about 105 km from Mumbai. This tiny hill station has an area of 7.35 sq. km, out of which 3.87 sq. km is reserved forest while 3.48 sq. km is under buildings, plots, tanks, roads etc. It has a maximum elevation of 803 m and an average rainfall of about 7,500 mm. I was in Matheran during the second week of April 2000. During the two day visit, I had the good fortune of sighting the eastern calandra-lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata*, of which this was the southernmost record and the lesser kestrel *Falco naumanni*, a Red Data species. The following is a brief account of the same.

Eastern Calandra-lark***Melanocorypha bimaculata***

On April 8, 2000, while returning from

Charlotte Lake, a man-made reservoir in Matheran, I spotted a solitary, relatively large member of Alaudidae. It moved hurriedly in the dry leaf litter, along the bank of the lake, stopping intermittently to peck at some edible morsel. The two very distinct features that caught my attention were its broad white supercilium and a black patch on the side of the breast. The tail was short, with a stroke of white on its tip. The bird was well camouflaged against the leafy background. It was noticeably stockier and more upright than the greater short-toed lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*. All the field characteristics pointed at only one candidate – the eastern calandra-lark. Later, on April 9, two more birds were sighted near One-Tree-Hill, the southernmost tip of Matheran. They were foraging in a rocky slope interspersed with dry grass beds. They remained in sight for over